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ABSTRACT

Intended as a means of helping teachers of grades four through six demonstrate economic principles in a pleasurable way, this booklet contains information about 12 children's books that illustrate basic economic concepts. The information provided for each book includes the economic concept illustrated, its author, publisher, and date of publication; a summary of its content; suggestions for teaching techniques; and lists of related activities and audiovisual materials. (FI)

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# Economic Education thru...

# LITERATURE

## Intermediate Grades, 4-6

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## INTRODUCTION

Since students in the intermediate grades are learning about many different cultures, it seems necessary to me that they also learn about the economic concepts that are basic to all cultures. This learning experience can come about very naturally by using familiar selections from their reading as backdrops for discussions about economic concepts.

I have selected two books for each of six concepts which can be used to demonstrate how literature can help. Then, I have also suggested activities that may be used to follow up and enhance the learning about economics that has already begun. Other books could be used rather than those I have chosen as long as the teacher recognizes the need to help the students discover their economic overtones.

When one realizes that economic principles affect us all in our everyday lives, it would seem essential that the concepts that affect our economy be understood as early as possible. I hope that these lessons will prove helpful in adding a necessary new dimension to the teaching of literature and economics.

**Grade:** Intermediate

**Economic Concept:** Wants

**Literature:** *This Hungry World*
by Elizabeth S. Helfman
Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Co.,
New York, 1970.

When thinking about people's wants, most of us probably think of the serious problems of those people in this country who have marginal incomes. *This Hungry World* by Elizabeth S. Helfman broadens our horizons to include the problems of hungry people all over the world. A major problem that they face is that the supply of food world-wide is inadequate to feed the exploding population. Now, concerned scientists are making all-out efforts to improve yields, to farm the oceans, and to break down centuries-old food prejudices.

The oceans may become a primary source of food as the science of sea farming, pioneered by the Japanese, becomes more productive. Improved cereal grains increase the harvest of wheat, corn, and rice; and children in South America, for example, are being encouraged to try newly-developed, protein-rich foods that will help them have much healthier diets than before.

**Activities:**

1. Have each child keep a diary of the food he eats for a week, listing not only his regular meals but also all snacks. The following week, these diets should be discussed for their strengths and weaknesses. Do they contain enough vitamins, minerals, and proteins? Or are the children, by choice, eating as poorly as some children who eat a substandard diet of necessity?
2. Divide the class into small groups. Have each group pick a South American country. Then, they should read in their reference books and elsewhere enough about the eating habits and needs in the individual countries so that the groups will be able to give oral reports to the rest of the class. It would be especially valuable to compare the average weekly diet of the class to the average diet of a Peruvian or Bolivian child, for example.
3. Try to find sample stalks of each of the major cereal grains so that the children can learn to recognize them and understand the food values of each kind. Committees could be formed for each grain such as wheat, corn, rice, oats, barley, and rye. Each committee could then do a research project about its own grain and present a report about this grain to the class. In some cases, for example, they may find that they are eating grains from which the parts that are highest in food value have been discarded in processing. Also, some enterprising committee might hand out cookies made from an experimental form of grain such as the bulgur that comes from wheat.

**Additional literature:** Wants

*How Will We Feed the Hungry Billions?*
by Nigel S. Hey, Julian Messner,
New York, 1971.

*How Will We Feed the Hungry Billions?* by Nigel S. Hey does not only ask a terribly difficult question but also suggests some possible answers. First, the book explains the reasons for hunger around the world: the used-up soil, the overpopulation, the food prejudices, etc. Then it proposes

some possible solutions for young people to consider. One of the most hopeful of these is called "The Green Revolution." It includes such improvements as wonder wheat, improved rice, and high-protein corn. These staple cereal grains can help a great deal in meeting the nutritional shortages all over the world. Yet, much more needs to be done, and perhaps some child in the class who read this book at such an impressionable age may be one who will later make a contribution toward solving the problems of hungry people everywhere whose legitimate wants for an adequate diet are not presently being met.

Filmstrip: *"Stone Soup."* Weston Woods, 46 frames, color, guide, record.
This filmstrip tells a story about hungry soldiers who use a stone as the basis for a soup that alleviates their hunger and unites the community.

**Grade:** Intermediate

**Economic concept:** Consumerism

**Literature:** *From Barter to Banking*
By William W. Wade.
The Macmillan Company,
New York, 1967.

*From Barter to Banking* by William W. Wade describes the many ways man has devised for paying for goods and services from earliest times until today. The children will be interested in stories of the swapping of goods, so much like their own swapping of baseball cards. In early days this kind of barter eventually led to a need for something that could be exchanged that would be worth as much to the buyer as to the seller. Eventually, coins were minted, paper money was printed, and later banks were established where checks could be used in place of cash. Now, the credit card is frequently used in place of either a check or money when goods or services are paid for. Basically, though, all of these methods are conveniences that allow a consumer to purchase what he wants with money or a money equivalent that has an agreed-upon value all over the country where it is used.

**Activities:**

1. Have the children bring in examples of materials that at one time were used in place of money. Some examples from the book: beads, dogs' teeth, salt, feathers, rings, stones, copper wire, shells, needles, bones, etc. Added to this collection could be any foreign coins or Confederate bills that some families have kept around for souvenirs.
2. On a ditto master, make a drawing of a check on an imaginary bank. Have enough checks run off so that each child can learn to fill in the proper information while he also learns why this information is necessary and where the check goes after a purchase has been made. In addition, have a talk with the class about credit cards: their advantages and drawbacks. Since many economists think that this country is becoming a cashless society, even fairly young people need to give some thought to these widely-used substitutes for cash, actually just another step in the age-ole bartering process.
3. Have each student become an expert in the money of a particular country chosen by him from anywhere in the world. He should be able to describe its coins and paper money and compare its worth in terms of United States coins. Encourage him, also, to try to find actual money from his country brought back by visitors as souvenirs. By doing this research, he will learn about inflated currencies and varied cultures as he and his classmates report back their findings.

**Additional literature:** Consumerism

*The Story of Money*
by A. H. Quiggin
Methuen and Co., Ltd.,
London, 1956.

*The Story of Money* by A. H. Quiggin tells about all kinds of articles that people have used all over the world when they have made purchases. It shows what a wide variety of materials has been accepted in place of money in different societies as a means of making sales while not resorting to actual barter of one commodity for another. The children can understand that they can not take some of their belongings to the store and exchange them for new shoes or a new plaything. Instead, they take some form of money which has its value marked on it.

This book is a fascinating history of kinds of money that have been used all over the world. The students will not only understand the function of money better when they have read it, but they will also understand the wide cultural differences in various parts of the world where the people's choices of kinds of money give a great deal of insight into their values.

Filmstrip: *"The Crystal Touch."* Animatic Productions, Fostoria Glass Co., 44 frames, color, guide, 1964.
This filmstrip shows the specialized skills required by glassmakers in making various kinds of glass that people wish to purchase.

**Grade:** Intermediate

**Economic Concept:** Production

**Literature:** *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* By Roald Dahl. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1964.

Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is a highly-imaginative book that brings out some important ideas about candy production. First, Mr. Wonka's workers like their work; they laugh and sing all day long. Second, Mr. Wonka carries on constant research in order to improve his confections; his laboratories are set up to help make better candies for the children of the world and to keep ahead of his competitors in the candy-making business. Third, Mr. Wonka takes great pride in his fine products because he knows he is giving happiness to those who buy them. These are the three points that the teacher could emphasize as the class follows Charlie on his tour of the factory.

After the book has been read and discussed, the teacher could ask the children about their favorite candy bars. Perhaps they have never thought about their manufacture; yet, as in the book, a real candy factory must have shelled nuts, melted chocolate, and creamy fillings. Perhaps someone in the class would have an original idea for a candy bar that has never been produced so far. He could tell the class about it. But the point to stress is that even the simplest jelly bean takes planned production: the sugar, the coloring, the shaping, the packaging, and then the shipping to the retailer. Actually, most factories operate in a similar way with allowances in planning for the kind of finished product that the manufacturer wishes to market.

**Activities:**

1. The ideal way for young people to understand about the manufacture of a product would be to take them on a tour of a factory where they could see, as Charlie did, each step along the way. They could also ask questions of the factory's people, who usually welcome the opportunity to show others the inside operations of their business. A very interesting place to go would be a bakery when the loaves are being shaped and prepared for the ovens. The tantalizing aromas from the freshly-baked bread would be every bit as heavenly as those of the chocolate factory, and the children could observe that bread-making bakeries also have their workers, their research departments, and their proud administrators.
2. Let each child make a drawing of his favorite room in Mr. Wonka's chocolate factory. The drawing should show his idea of the candy-making machinery, the pygmy workers, and Mr. Wonka, the owner. Later on, it would be possible to determine which candy room the children like best and why they like it.
3. Ask a businessman of the community to visit the classroom and bring a sample of the product he sells. He should be able to explain how this product is manufactured: the raw materials it requires; the labor it takes; the kind of building it is made in; the ways, if any, that it has been modified to better serve the people's wants; and any plans for future changes. He should allow time for the children to ask questions so that they can satisfy their curiosity about the entire production process that has been aroused by their reading about the chocolate factory.

**Additional literature:** Production

*Man Builds Tomorrow*
by Ress and Liebow.
Creative Educational Society, Inc.,
Mankato, Minn., 1966.

In *Man Builds Tomorrow* by Ress and Liebow, the intermediate classes can begin to grasp some of the wonders of automation. First, they are shown some of the familiar automated objects around the home: the thermostat, the clock radio, and the electric iron. Then they discover how automation affects the worker when machines take over the jobs that have formerly been done by hand. Next, they find out how the machines are monitored so that they can be repaired when they break down. Also, they will realize that use of tapes for feedback helps the producer save valuable manufacturing time; furthermore, the management can get detailed information quickly and accurately from electronically-sorted computer cards. Thus, the use of automation has speeded up and improved production all along the line from the raw materials to the finished product.

Filmstrip: *"The Cradle of American History."* Filmfax Productions, 48 frames, color, guide, captions.
This filmstrip shows the development of iron production in the United States from the arrival of the Mayflower to the present time.

**Grade:** Intermediate

**Economic Concept:** Specialization

**Literature:** *East to Cathay*
By Robert Collins
McGraw Hill Book Co.,
New York, 1968.

Because the Chinese were the first people who learn to make cloth from the web of the silkworm, their product was in great demand from distant countries. In *East to Cathay,* Robert Collins tells of the terrible hardships that were endured by the men who had to brave extremes of heat and cold as well as the ferocity of enemy barbarians in trying to establish trade routes for the much-desired silken cloth.

The Chinese in those times were specialists in spinning, weaving, and dyeing the silk and were able to produce farm more than they needed at home. On the other hand, they did need some of the products of the Persian and Roman empires; thus, their oversupply of silk enabled them to barter it for the other goods that they needed. In those early times, however, the dangers from the Tartars and other barbarous tribes make this book exciting in itself as well as for its lesson about a country's development by means of its sale of a specialized product.

**Activities:**

1. Ask a fabric store for some swatches of different colors of silk. The book mentions how well silk takes various dyes. Also, it tells about paintings on the silk, and this would be easy to demonstrate by cutting a vine and leaf stencil with a single-edged razor blade or sharp knife. Then, with a tiny bottle of green textile paint, the class could watch the design appear upon the silk cloth. Furthermore, since silk is the product of a small animal, the silkworm, the class would be interested to see a comparison of the flammability of animal fibers such as silk and wool compared to that of vegetable fibers like cotton, or synthetics like nylon.
2. Another project would be possible if the class could see an actual cocoon similar to the one the silkworm spins from which the silk thread is then taken. And they could understand the silkworm raising better if they could see real leaves from a mulberry tree, the sole food of the silkworm.
3. Trace on a wall map, the routes followed by the silk traders. Or, if no wall map is available, trace one from a book onto a ditto master and make a copy available for each child. Then, they will be able to color in the hazardous route from China to Persia to Rome of the silk traders of early days.

**Additional literature:** Specialization

*Annie and the Old One*
by Miska Miles.
Little, Brown and Co.,
Boston and Toronto, 1971.

The Navajo Indians, like the Chinese people of old, have specialized skills. In *Annie and the Old One* by Miska Miles, the class will learn about rug-making skill of the Navajo women that is handed down from grandmother to daughter to granddaughter. When a rug is completed that is not needed by the family, it is traded for other goods that cannot be produced at home.

Perhaps some class member may have a small Navajo rug that he could bring to class and show to the students. They will have read in this book how the weaving is done and will appreciate the finished product much more on this account. In addition, some other examples of Navajo work could be found such as jars, baskets, or silver and turquoise jewelry. Sometimes, too, a railroad whose lines go near Indian lands have public relations representatives who will give talks about the Navajo culture and show many specimens of their handiwork.

Filmstrip: *"The Navajos."* Life, 66 frames, black and white, 1962.
This filmstrip shows many elements of the Navajo culture from pictures taken on their lands. It shows, for example, a picture of a Navajo woman weaving at her loom just as the grandmother and mother have done in *Annie and the Old One.*

**Grade:** Intermediate

**Economic Concept:** Scarcity

**Literature:** *Sparrows Don't Drop Candy Wrappers* by Margaret Gabel. Dodd, Mead and Co., New York, 1971.

In thinking about the problem of scarcity in this world, we must remember that our natural resources are limited. The book *Sparrows Don't Drop Candy Wrappers* by Margaret Gabel reminds us that we are the problem, and therefore the best time to prevent bad habits of littering and wastefulness from becoming established is in the early formative years.

Some young people can take ecology walks, listen to ecology talks, and write impassioned ecology essays but still fail to connect the problem with their actions in their personal lives. Hopefully, this book will help. It speaks through words and pictures to the young person in a direct appeal for him to think about his usual habits critically, asking himself whether he is contributing to the waste that is robbing the earth of its best qualities: its bounty and its beauty. Then, perhaps he will realize that these same qualities are irreplaceable; so he must do his best to protect what is already there.

**Activities:**

1. Make a display bulletin board showing some of the threatened species mentioned in the book. The girls will be able to find pictures of leopard coats, feathered boas, or lizard shoes in fashion magazines, for example. And the boys can find articles depicting vanishing wildlife or disappearing natural resources in many current periodicals.
2. Take an ecology walk around the school building. Upon the discovery of an offending candy wrapper, ask the class whether they think a sparrow may have dropped it. Be sure that the children understand that it is people, including themselves, who are the real offenders. The trash does not drop out of the sky but out of people's careless hands.
3. Upon returning to the classroom, make a list on a transparency at the overhead projector of the kinds of undesirable activities* that people, not sparrows, indulge in. Let one student list the first suggestion on the transparency, and then he can choose his own replacement from the class, changing frequently enough so that the whole class will become personally involved in the activity either by writing or by suggesting an item.

**Additional literature:** Scarcity

*Now or Never* by D. S. Halacy, Jr. Four Winds Press, New York, 1971.

*Now or Never* by D. S. Halacy, Jr. warns us that the scarce resources of the earth are being used up rapidly because man is so wasteful. After reading the book and discussing its illuminating pictures, it would be a good idea to ask the class some or all of the questions called a "Check List for Your Community" as the book suggests. Then, possibly some individual students may wish to follow up this discussion by investigating on their own for answers to those questions where only vague responses were given. Later, these reports could be given to the class, and a follow-up discussion could then ensue. Since habits of wastefulness are such personal, every-day

* Littering, wasting materials, killing scarce animals, etc.

matters, it would be a good idea to have the children make their own photographs, similar to those in the book, for display or polluted sights in their own neighborhood and school yard or school lavatory. Then, they might finally become aware of the part they must play to prevent the "never" from happening of *Now or Never.*

Filmstrip: *"Together We Toil."* Filmstrip House, The Holy Land Series, black and white, 50 frames, guide, captions.
This filmstrip tells how the people of the Holy Land try to replenish the scarcity that exists through hard work.

**Grade:** Intermediate

**Economic Concept:** Decision making

**Literature:** *Freedom and Plenty: Ours to Save.*
by Wilfrid S. Bronson
Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc.
New York, 1953.

Wilfrid S. Bronson's book, *Freedom and Plenty: Ours to Save,* tells us that in a free society we are all responsible for making the choices that will help preserve our way of life. Each individual must realize that our natural resources are not limitless; therefore, the farmer must decide on less wasteful ways of farming, and the manufacturer must choose to use our dwindling supplies carefully and also look for new ways of supplementing them with previously unused resources.

The pictures in this book will add to the children's knowledge of production methods in farms and industry, and they will better understand the problems of the present-day producers in needing wise management in order to guarantee that our way of life can continue. The farmers, for example, can learn at government demonstrations the methods that will help them preserve their land, and industry has research departments that have developed processes such as those used in the steel industry where material called slag, previously thought of as waste, can now be used to give richness to the farmers' soil. We must hope that the decision makers in all kinds of production will choose courses of action that will keep our country fee and well-supplied.

**Activities:**

1. Have a class discussion about containers enhanced by a display of the various types: refillable glass, throwaway glass, plastic, cardboard, paper, etc. Talk about the advantages and disadvantages of each. Remind the class that decision making becomes a personal matter when they vote for a certain container by spending their money for it, because the manufacturer studies buying habits so that he can provide the kinds of containers that the buying public wants.
2. With suggestions from everyone, compose a class letter to the newspaper with suggestions for cutting down on waste. Some possibilities: using more refillable bottles, gathering used aluminum cans for recycling, returning clean grocery sacks to the store, or refusing a sack when it isn't really necessary.
3. See section following Additional Literature below.

**Additional literature:** Decision making

*What Are Me and You Gonna Do?*
Ballantine Books, New York, 1971.

*What Are Me and You Gonna Do?* is a book of letters asking Senator Gaylord Nelson what decisions must be made to help provide the goods people need and yet preserve the good things of the earth. The letters were written by school children because they felt that much of the decision making that affects their future takes place in Washington. Senator Nelson published the letters in the belief that young people everywhere are concerned about the same or similar problems, and they in turn may do their small part in helping influence decision making that will bring the greatest benefit to all.

3. Divide the class into small groups. Each group will contribute a page to a class book of letters and drawings similar to those received by Senator Nelson. It could be laced together with ribbon or colored string. The book could then be sent to the district's own senator or representative in Congress. Apparently, the sincerity of the thoughts of young people can strike a responsive chord with some legislators that cannot be matched by adult correspondents. In addition, a congressman undoubtedly realizes that these same young people will be the ones who will suffer if Congress makes the wrong decisions affecting their futures.

Filmstrip: *"Facts and Facets of the Automotive Industry."* Ford Motor Company, black and white, 117 frames.
This filmstrip tells of the decision making processes leading to the design of a new car.

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